CASE STUDY · TOYS

Make It Real Found a Los Angeles 3PL That Cut Costs 11% and Took Over Drayage and Freight

A toy brand with a mostly retail business was getting poor service from its Los Angeles 3PL, and our analysis showed it was paying above-market rates. A structured comparison found a partner that also runs its drayage and outbound freight, and cut costs 11%.

Costs down 11%

AT A GLANCE

Company	Make It Real, toys
Business mix	About 99% B2B retail, with two small DTC waves a year
Storage	2,000 to 3,500 pallets at peak, held up to five months
Outbound	About 1,000 LTL and 50 FTL shipments a year, plus small parcel
Region	Los Angeles area (Southern California and Houston considered)
Timeline	September to November 2024, scope to kickoff

BY THE NUMBERS

11%
lower cost

3,500
pallets at seasonal peak

~10 weeks
from scope to kickoff

Background

Make It Real is a toy brand whose business is almost entirely retail. Product arrives in containers, builds up ahead of the selling season to as many as 3,500 pallets, and leaves as LTL and full-truckload shipments to retailers, with only a small amount of direct-to-consumer volume twice a year.

The challenge

Service at the brand's Los Angeles 3PL was poor, and when we benchmarked its rates against our market data, it was paying above-market prices for that service. The team wanted to save money, but a toy business cannot afford a move that goes wrong before peak.

Any new partner had to handle heavy seasonal storage, container drayage from the port and retail outbound freight, and the move itself had to be planned so the brand did not pay twice to transfer thousands of pallets.

What mattered most: Make It Real's Decision-Making Criteria

Every 3PL Bridge evaluation starts by turning the team's pain points into weighted Decision-Making Criteria. Operators are then qualified and compared against those criteria, not against a generic checklist. These are the criteria that shaped Make It Real's decision.

Criterion	What it meant for this brand	Importance
Total cost against market	Rates in line with the Los Angeles market, verified line by line.	5/5
Seasonal storage capacity	Room for 2,000 to 3,500 pallets for up to five months.	5/5
Drayage and outbound freight	Port drayage, LTL and FTL handled by the same partner.	4/5
Transition plan	Inventory transfer without paying full receiving and storage twice.	4/5
Service and responsiveness	An operator that answers detailed questions directly.	4/5
Live before peak	Operational ahead of the retail selling season.	5/5

Importance on a 1 to 5 scale, where 5 could decide the outcome on its own.

How the evaluation worked

The brand's finance and operations lead reviewed pricing in detail with 3PL Bridge, with dozens of line-item questions answered directly by the operator. The transfer was priced as its own plan: inbound storage waived on transferred product, a flat per-load trucking rate, and a schedule of several loads a day. The brand also reviewed packing lists from real container shipments with the operator so receiving was priced on actual cartons.

The team flew to Los Angeles to see the operation in person. A competing option offered to move the inventory for free, but once the full monthly cost and service were compared, the brand chose the partner from our evaluation. Kickoff was held in November 2024.

The result

Costs came down 11%, and the new 3PL also runs the brand's drayage and outbound freight, so container pickup, storage and retail shipping now sit with one accountable partner.

What other brands can take from this

- Benchmark your current rates before you decide whether to move. Knowing you are above market changes the negotiation.
- Price the transition, not just the steady state. Waived inbound storage and a flat transfer rate can be worth more than a lower pick fee.
- For B2B-heavy brands, a 3PL that also runs drayage and freight removes hand-offs that cause missed retail windows.

Questions brands ask

How do I know if my 3PL is charging above market?

Compare your invoices against market averages for your warehouse's market. 3PL Bridge's analysis showed Make It Real was paying above-market rates in Los Angeles before it moved and cut costs 11%.

What should a 3PL transition plan include?

At minimum, the cost of moving inventory, whether inbound and storage fees are waived on transferred product, and a load schedule. Make It Real priced its transfer as a separate plan before signing.

Written by 3PL Bridge with Make It Real's approval. Operator names are kept private. Published November 2026.

3PL Bridge helps brands evaluate, compare and choose 3PLs. No cost to brands.

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